

MS. MCILWAINE: I feel a little outnumbered here. My name is Melinda McIlwaine. I live in Emigration Canyon in Salt Lake County. I'm here today as a human, a mother. I'm concerned about my family, a naturalist and a reluctant Rocky Mountain Power customer. We live in a time when we as an intelligent species must make intelligent choices. Climate change science is irrefutable and we can see what is happening where frequent incidences of violent weather, milder winters, shrinking snowpack. We can also see our human influences on these changes in the form of regional haze and inversions. Change is inevitable and the planet will adapt with or without us. The expansion of the Alton Coal Mine will impact the species that has gotten a lot of press lately, the greater sage grouse. In lieu of having the sage grouse listed on the endangered species list, Utah agreed to ramp up its efforts to protect this bird and its habitat. The Alton Coal Mine will impact where these birds accomplish their annual mating rituals, which are quite amazing to see. Unlike wetlands that are sacrificed for dams, roads, shopping mall, housing developments, and other human disturbances, leks, which have been established for thousands of years, cannot be moved or mitigated. When compared to the many families that have made their livings and dimes by coal, one might ask, how important are these birds? Let me suggest that they represent a warning to all of us, for their extinction pre-stages our own. Just as a sage grouse cannot move its lek, we as a species cannot adapt to poisoning or planetary air and water with fossil fuel and emissions. If we can spend trillions on our warm machine, we can find the pocket change to shift to a clean energy infrastructure. We can find the funds to deconstruct and rebuild our energy grid. We can bring those who have toiled underground -- and I want to thank you for that -- for generations above ground and into the daylight. We can retrain that workforce and say good-bye to a polluting energy source that is no longer appropriate to the health of our species, our families, our communities, and those we share the planet with. To the BLM and the Federal Government and the State of Utah and Rocky Mountain Power, I ask for the leadership that will move us towards a renewable energy future, a leadership that has the moral courage with regard to fossil fuels, to leave it in the ground. Thank you.